


M E M O

Date: July 1, 2008

To: Executive Board

From: Ceil Scandone, Senior Regional Planner 

Subject: Green Building Policies and Programs

Summary

Bay Area cities and counties are implementing green building programs in increasing numbers. Green building practices have also gained momentum in the construction marketplace. While initially oriented towards commercial and institutional projects, residential green building has recently earned significant attention.

Build It Green is a Bay Area – based non-profit professional membership organization whose mission is to promote healthy, energy and resource-efficient buildings in California. *Build It Green* fosters collaboration with key public and private sector stakeholder groups and provides assistance to local governments to accelerate the adoption of green building programs.

In 2006, *Build It Green* introduced GreenPoint Rated (GPR), a third-party rating system for residential construction. GPR allows builders and contractors who create green homes to brand their products with a recognizable, trustworthy seal of approval. GreenPoint Rated has become a key element of a number of local programs.

In January 2008, the Home Builders Association of Northern California (HBANC) announced support for the adoption of residential green building programs based on the Green Point Rated system. HBANC's endorsement, the first of its kind in the nation, opens the door for more widespread implementation of regionally-consistent green building programs.

At the June 2008 Regional Planning Committee (RPC) meeting, Brian Gitt, *Build It Green's* Executive Director and CEO, made a presentation about their services and suggested ways that ABAG can help to advance green building in the region. The Committee endorsed the implementation of comprehensive green building programs that include GreenPoint Rated for residential projects, and directed staff to schedule a presentation to the Executive Board. Mr. Gitt will be joined by RPC member Joseph Perkins, President and Chief Executive Officer of HBANC, and Cheryl O'Connor, Chair, HBANC Executive Committee.

Build It Green is seeking Executive Board support for implementation of comprehensive green building programs with GreenPoint Rated as the verification system for residential projects.

Introduction

With its emphasis on sustainable site selection and design, energy and water-efficient construction, and use of natural and non-toxic materials, green building practices can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, complement efforts to promote “smart growth,” reduce the amount of waste generated during construction and throughout the life of a building, and provide better indoor air quality to building occupants.

The Bay Area is recognized as a leader in promoting green building practices. Many local governments require that their own facilities meet the US Green Building Council (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards. Many private companies have voluntarily built new headquarters and other facilities to LEED standards. In fact, LEED standards are rapidly becoming a prerequisite for Class A office projects in many markets.

Local governments have begun to extend their requirements from civic projects to either encourage with incentives or require that commercial and residential projects built by the private sector incorporate green building features. Within the Bay Area dozens of jurisdictions now have voluntary educational or incentive-based programs to promote green building in the private-sector; 18 jurisdictions have mandatory green building programs; 25+ are actively developing comprehensive mandatory programs, with many transitioning to a mandatory approach from a previously adopted voluntary program (*see Attachment A*).

Green Building Leaders

The US Green Building Council is a national non-profit organization committed to sustainable building practices. The USGBC LEED standards are the predominant rating system for institutional and commercial construction. LEED offers a variety of rating levels for new construction, tenant improvements and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing buildings. Recognizing that buildings that serve specialized purposes have unique characteristics, LEED has developed rating systems for commercial, retail, healthcare, schools facilities and homes.

While LEED has until recently focused its energies in the commercial realm, two Bay Area organizations have developed special expertise in the residential green building sector. All of the Bay Area jurisdictions that have established voluntary or mandatory residential green building programs have based their policies on guidelines and resources developed by these two organizations: StopWaste.Org and Build It Green.

StopWaste.Org is the name used by the joint powers agency legally known as the Alameda County Waste Management Authority and the Alameda County Source Reduction and Recycling Board. Since March 2001, Stopwaste.Org has provided green building design resources to its 17 member jurisdictions to encourage green building practices. The program has provided services to approximately 100 public and public-benefit projects, awarding over \$1.6 million in grants for projects such as City Halls, Libraries, Fire Stations, Educational Facilities, Senior and Community Centers, and Residential Projects (Multifamily & Single Family). Stopwaste.Org was the original developer of the Build It Green Residential Green Building Guidelines and continues to be a major strategic partner.

Build It Green is a professional non-profit membership organization whose mission is to promote healthy, energy and resource-efficient buildings in California. *Build It Green* fosters collaboration with key stakeholder groups to accelerate the adoption of green building practices, policies, and programs with a particular focus on residential projects. Stakeholder groups include

public agencies, building professionals, production builders, affordable housing producers, realtors and building suppliers. Supported by a solid foundation of outreach and education, *Build It Green* connects consumers and building professionals with a wide range of tools and technical expertise they need to build quality green buildings.

Green Building Guidelines

Build It Green offers Green Building Guidelines for New Home Construction, Home Remodeling, and Multifamily Construction. Recommended measures were specifically developed to address climate and market conditions in California, are endorsed by credible third-party sources, and are backed by sound building science.

The Guidelines were developed and refined by a diverse group of residential building stakeholders including production builders, contractors, architects and designers, multifamily home developers, state and local government leaders, building-science experts, product manufacturers and suppliers, and green building advocates. In the past six years, numerous local governments have adopted the Guidelines as the foundation for their programs. The Guidelines are updated regularly in alignment with the State Energy Efficiency requirements (i.e. Title 24). Copies are available for download from www.builditgreen.org and hard copies are available for purchase (with bulk discounts) for use in local green building programs.

GreenPoint Rated

In 2006, *Build It Green* introduced GreenPoint Rated, a program that rewards builders and contractors who create green homes by allowing them to brand their products with a recognizable, trustworthy seal of approval. The program is increasingly becoming an element of voluntary and mandatory green building programs in the Bay Area.

The GreenPoint Rated program provides an objective, third-party verification system that helps consumers find green homes, understand green benefits, and recognize green features. Conservation of natural resources, increased energy efficiency and improved indoor air quality are just a few of the benchmarks a home must meet.

The GreenPoint Rated program leverages *Build It Green*'s Guidelines. The recommended practices and performance benchmarks were specifically developed to address climate and market conditions in California. Point values are assigned based on their benefits to the homeowner and the environment, and reflect construction practices that exceed California's building and energy code requirements. Any eligible project that achieves the minimum of 50 total points and meets the category-specific point thresholds earns the right to bear the GreenPoint Rated label.

Locally trained and certified raters evaluate whether new home construction projects meet program standards. GreenPoint Rated offers an array of benefits for different stakeholders.

- Home buyers look for the GreenPoint Rated logo to be sure they're actually getting a healthy, environmentally-responsible home.
- Builders and contractors receive validation from a trusted, independent source to support their marketing efforts as a green builder.
- Local governments and policy makers are able to track the number and types of green homes in their communities and better understand the resource and health benefits those homes represent relative to conventional alternatives.

Home Builders Association of Northern California Goes Green

The most recent significant milestone in the evolution of green building in the Bay Area has been the forward looking endorsement of residential green building and the GreenPoint Rated program by the Home Builders Association of Northern California (HBANC). In January 2008, HBANC took the unprecedented step of endorsing the use of GreenPoint Rated in mandatory green building programs in their 14 county service area, which includes the Bay Area's nine counties and 101 cities. HBANC's endorsement is the first of its kind in the nation and opens the door for widespread adoption of regionally-consistent green building programs. HBANC is jointly cosponsoring a Builders Council with *Build It Green* to promote green building education for production home builders. HBANC's action demonstrates the viability of green building and further demonstrates the Bay Area's leadership statewide and on the national stage.

Build It Green Presentation – July 17, 2008

At the Executive Board Meeting on July 17, *Build it Green* Executive Director Brian Gitt will make a presentation on Build It Green and GreenPoint Rated. The presentation will cover the following points:

- What Build It Green offers: e.g. information to support value, and tools, such as sample ordinances, that can make it easier to implement comprehensive green building programs with support from the public and builders.
- How comprehensive green building programs with "GreenPoint Rated at 50 Points" as the foundation for residential green building can help to achieve local and regional climate protection and other objectives.
- GreenPoint Rated can make residential green building easy: a number of jurisdictions are already using the system, so newer jurisdictions have their experience to draw upon.
- Green building programs can provide green jobs for local green building experts.
- Support from Boards of Supervisors and City Councils needed to accelerate implementation of local green building programs.

ACTION REQUESTED:

THAT the Executive Board endorses the implementation of consistent green building guidelines and encourages the rapid adoption by Bay Area cities and counties, of Green Building Programs including GreenPoint Rated as the verification system for residential projects.

The Executive Board directs ABAG staff to identify opportunities to incorporate green building criteria in relevant program activities, including FOCUS.

The Executive Board directs ABAG staff to cooperate with Build It Green, StopWaste.Org and other partners in providing information about and publicizing the advantages of comprehensive green building programs and GreenPoint Rated to ABAG member jurisdictions.

Attachment A

ABAG Jurisdictions with Mandatory Green Building Programs

- Livermore
- Pleasanton
- Albany
- San Rafael
- Novato
- Rohnert Park
- Larkspur
- Cotati
- Sebastopol
- Moraga
- Los Altos
- Windsor
- Marin County
- Berkeley
- Hillsborough
- San Mateo (City)
- Los Altos Hills
- Hayward (multi-family projects)

ABAG Jurisdictions developing Mandatory Green Building Programs

- Santa Rosa
- Petaluma
- Alameda
- Palo Alto
- San Francisco
- San Jose
- Sonoma (City)
- Napa Cities
- Marin Cities
- Brisbane
- Atherton
- Gilroy
- Campbell
- Santa Clara
- Cupertino
- Morgan Hill
- Palo Alto
- Saratoga
- Monte Sereno
- Milpitas
- Sunnyvale
- Mountain View
- Gilroy
- San Mateo County
- Solano County

